



Literacy Standards Review Team

Meeting Notes

Date: Wednesday, May 25, 2016

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Location: Grimes State Office Building – B100, Des Moines, Iowa

MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Vickie Antsey, Griswold Community School District
- Beth Baker-Brodersen, Des Moines Area Community College
- Sandra Beisker, Dubuque Community School District
- Sarah Brown Wessling, Johnston Community School District
- Lauren Burt, Meredith Corporation
- Bridget Castelluccio, Cedar Rapids Community School District
- Kara Dietrich, Ballard Community School District
- Salli Forbes, University of Northern Iowa
- Dixie Forcht, South Tama Community School District
- Carol Glackin, Morningside College
- Mendy Haefs, St. Patrick Elementary School, Sheldon
- Sally Huddle, Iowa Wesleyan University
- Liz Hansen, Grinnell-Newburg Community School District
- Laura Johnson, Grant Wood Area Education Agency
- Heather Lundquist, Atlantic Community School District
- Kelsey Meyer, Grundy Center Community School District
- Kristine Milburn, West Des Moines Community School District
- Erin Miller, Ames Community School District
- Kathy Perret, Northwest Area Education Agency
- Jonathan Rogers, Iowa City Community School District
- Janelle Thompson, Heartland Area Education Agency
- Molly Tripp, A-H-S-T Community School District
- Josh Wager, Des Moines Public Schools

Committee members who were absent: Jonathan Rogers from the Iowa City Community School District and Deborah Reed from Iowa Reading Research Center.

Also in attendance were Rebecca Bates and Tori Cirks, consultants with Midwest Comprehensive Center; Rita Martens, administrative consultant for the Department of

Education's Bureau of Standards and Curriculum; Erika Cook, bureau chief for Standards and Literacy; Sandy Nelson with the Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports; Emily Grimm, an observer from Iowans for Higher Standards; and Melissa Walker, writer for the review committee.

Agenda item: Welcome and Norms Review

Notes: Rita Martens, Standards and Curriculum consultant, introduced new guests: Marian Godwin, a data coordinator who analyzed the data from the online survey and formatted it into searchable Microsoft Excel files for committee members to review; and Tori Cirks, a consultant from Midwest Comprehensive Center, who works with Rebecca Bates, also from MCC, and would help lead the committee through an in-depth examination of the survey data.

Committee co-chairwoman Liz Hansen briefly reviewed the norms and guidelines that the committee had agreed upon.

Martens began discussion with the survey. Each committee member was given a printed copy of the survey in its entirety, which was 142 pages long and had 175 questions. Martens said the number of survey respondents dropped off once survey-takers were asked to review the standards in detail. There were 5,246 respondents who took the survey, and they represented all areas of Iowa. She explained that survey-takers were allowed to specify whether they wanted to keep a standard as it is, eliminate the standard, or make changes to it. They could then provide comments about how the standard should be changed. Starting with question 158 were questions specific to educators that asked how the standards were being implemented in the teacher's district; how prepared they felt to deliver the standards to students; what level the district was at in implementation of the literacy standards; how much professional development the teachers have received in regards to the standards, its quality and how helpful the training has been; and to reflect on the standards.

Martens said there has been numerous opportunities for Iowans to provide information and feedback that will help the committee make its decision about whether to revise the literacy standards. In addition to the online survey, there were two focus groups of literacy teachers who discussed the standards, and two public forums, one in West Des Moines and one in Grinnell. The discussion at the West Des Moines forum was recorded, and a transcript was provided to the committee. The audio was disabled at the Grinnell forum, but those who spoke were asked to summarize their comments and send them to Martens. She shared those written comments that were received with committee members. The Department of Education also has received a couple of unsolicited comments in regards to the standards, which Martens said she would share with the committee.

She said: "Iowans really care about what their kids learn, and they want to have a voice."

Agenda item: Survey Review and Context

Notes: Review committee members were given a Microsoft Excel file with all of the online survey data in it.

Godwin discussed the survey with the review committee and explained terms such as “qualitative” and “quantitative” and how they pertain to the survey results. “Qualitative” data are the comments that were received. “Quantitative” data are a certain number who responded to a question in a specific way. She created a tool for the Excel document which enabled the committee members to determine from whom specific comments came: i.e. a school teacher or an Area Education Agency representative.

Godwin went through various tabs on the Excel document to explain where different survey questions were located. She conducted the same data cleanup analysis work when the state reviewed the Next Generation Science Standards. She said respondents to the literacy standards survey provided many more comments than they did for science.

For the standards, rating averages were created in order to determine which standards received responses to eliminate or revise it. The larger the rating, the more outliers – requests for removal or revision – it has.

Agenda item: Assumptions and Predictions and Survey Findings

Notes: Bates and Cirks from the Midwest Comprehensive Center led the review committee through an activity in which members explored their assumptions and made predictions about the survey findings before reviewing the data.

The committee was divided into pairs and triads based on grade bands with two groups for each grade band. The goal was to give committee members an opportunity to look at assumptions and predictions from others’ perspectives.

The committee divided into groups, and Bates and Cirks gave them their directions. They were to determine any assumptions they had about the data in order to make predictions about what they thought data would show. Committee members were given a worksheet to complete within their pair or triad and answer based on the grade band they were assigned.

They were asked: What do you predict will be the top three emergent themes within the Iowa literacy standards survey?

Then they were asked to make predictions with the following questions:

- Who responded to the survey?
- What is the response rate for each of the groups?
- What was the response rate for each section of the survey?

The groups discussed the questions and then reported to the larger group:

- Some of the Iowa standards are redundant and more strategies than standards.
- There needs to be more professional development.
- The standards need to be developed to better meet the needs of ELL and special education students.
- It’s too early in the process to validate changes when an assessment piece hasn’t yet been created for standards – how can they change the standard at this point?
- The majority of respondents would be teachers. There are 35,000 elementary and secondary teachers in Iowa.

How can they put assumptions and predictions aside to focus on the data?

- Being aware and cognizant they exist.
- By starting from the data, not personal experiences. Personal experience may play into the conversation at a later time, but the data need to drive the process.
- By acknowledging they've voiced assumptions, which will be helpful in order to remind one another they're not using assumptions when reviewing the data.

Bates discussed trends in the data and asked the group how they would determine whether something was a trend or a single data point. The group decided any trend would have to be justified and backed up with data.

Cirks cautioned the group that as they analyze the data it's human nature to pick up on things that validate their own point of view. She encouraged partners to question each other if they suspected one was trying to push their own viewpoint.

The committee spent several hours analyzing the survey data from the lens of the grade bands they were assigned to represent. They were asked to consider four basic points and record them:

- Areas of significance. This could be something that was important to them or stood out with a large number of the respondents.
- Contradictions to their predictions.
- Confirmations to their predictions.
- Concerns. This could be something that was unexpected or if only a specific group responded in a certain way.

Godwin explained that the rating system could be a good way to spot concerns. Each response to a standard was assigned a weight: 1 if it was selected to make no changes; 2 if suggestions were made; or 3 if it was suggested to eliminate the standard. The rate was then determined by averaging the weighted responses.

Agenda item: Survey Data Review

Notes: Grade level bands then met together and shared a couple of “aha” moments about the data. Afterward, they identified trends within the data. The goal was for the team to be able to make recommendations based on these guiding questions:

- 1) If the literacy standards need revision, what revisions or additions are necessary?
- 2) How does implementation of the standards by districts and teachers need to be supported?

Committee members were asked to specifically note standards that garnered written responses from survey-takers.

Martens explained that the discussion and committee feedback would be used by Department of Ed staff to identify areas where revisions to standards and recommendations could be written and presented to the review committee. She said for example, based on the discussion and presentation at the April meeting, there could be revisions to reflect the digital age. Staff also needs guidance about the standards that are specifically tailored to Iowa.

After the discussion, the points were written on chart paper. Each group briefly highlighted its thoughts, and committee members then voted on whether they agreed with the change or revision to the standard. The suggestions were a vote to explore the area in more depth and for

a recommendation to be written. An official vote will occur on all of the standards and revisions or eliminations at a later date.

Grade level band discussion

If the literacy standards need revision, what revisions or additions are necessary?

- **K-2:** Most responses to most standards were to keep as is. In regards to Iowa Standard 1 (IA.1) for Literature and Informational Texts, there were several suggestions or revisions that were recorded. Among those suggestions/revisions were to add “with support;” to separate comprehension strategies into separate standards; to add sequencing; to eliminate; and to match with other standards.
- **3-5:** Overall, the number of standards for revision was higher in grades three and four, and dipped for fifth grade. The majority (67 percent) felt the standards helped students learn, and 71 percent said they helped teachers focus. About 57 percent said there were an unmanageable amount of standards and that they were difficult for ELL, special ed and at-risk students. Most respondents suggested eliminating IA.1 in both literature and informational texts because it was redundant or in another standard. It was suggested to revise standard 3.6, 4.6 and 5.6 about writing for extended periods and time and using technology because it was described as too much and unmanageable (fourth grade); too dependent upon technology (third grade); and too specific, out of date and too much with students being asked to type a two-page paper in a designated amount of time (fifth grade). In literature standard 4.4, it was suggested to eliminate the standard because of the complexity and not being developmentally appropriate, or to remove the word “mythology.”
- **6-8:** There was very little feedback for the language arts standards. For grades 6, 7 and 8, it was suggested to eliminate standards IA.1 (or to cover it in standard 10) and IA.2 for literature, IA.1 and IA.2 for informational texts, and IA.5 and IA.6 for speaking and listening (this seemed like a task and not a standard). It was also suggested to eliminate standard 5 for literature for seventh grade (9 of 15 respondents) and either revise or combine it with the poetry standard.
- **9-12:** The Iowa-specific standards received the most feedback, but in general, about 80 percent agreed that the standards lead to better learning. There was also a high level of reported implementation for the standards. Specific recommendations were to eliminate standards IA.1 and IA.2 for literature and informational texts for 9-10 and 11-12. Standard 9 in informational text for 9-10 should be eliminated or moved to social studies because it was too text specific. Standards 8 and 9 in informational text for 11-12 should be eliminated or moved to social studies. Standards 5, 6 and 7 in speaking and listening for 9-10 should be eliminated or embedded into standards 1 and 4. Standard IA.5 in speaking and listening for 11-12 should be eliminated. Standard IA.6 in speaking and listening for 11-12 should be added to standard 6. The meaning of “public” was questioned. Standard IA.7 in speaking and listening for 11-12 should be moved to standard 4.

How does implementation of the standards by districts and teachers need to be supported?

- **K-2:** There needs to be professional development on the assessment in relation to question 162. I.e. how to use, what to use and how to interpret the data. There also

needs to be differentiation of how the Iowa Core standards can be taught to all students regardless of background or learning level. There needs to be additional assessments on how to align the standards and additional resources on how to teach the standards.

- **3-5:** 29 percent of respondents disagreed on whether there was adequate ongoing support to implement the literacy standards (question 161). There also needs to be more support for differentiation and teaching of subgroups (hearing impaired, dyslexic, ELL, special education, at-risk students, etc.) Respondents also said there needs to be more time for collaboration and planning and more district resources devoted to implementation of the standards. There also need to be summative and formative assessments.
- **6-8:** Most feedback came from a desire to receive more professional development and collaboration time. It was specifically mentioned to have professional development related to the instruction of poetry and drama.
- **9-12:** There needs to be more professional development for differentiation of the standards for at-risk, ELL, special education and students with cognitive disabilities. There needs to be more professional development to align formative and summative assessments to the Iowa Core. The IowaCore.gov website needs to have suggestions about potential assessments and more professional development resources that can be utilized through the website. It was suggested to tie some TQ funding to the Iowa Core.
- **Content Areas:** The feedback for assessments was the same as K-2. There needs to be integration of standards across content areas – there are many misconceptions about what certain words mean. Respondents would like more collaboration among colleagues. Data indicated only 35 percent were using the Iowa Core implementation plan – what sort of accountability does the state have for this other than a written document saying it's being done?

Agenda item: Review of Public Forums and Focus Groups

Notes: Martens shared information about the focus groups with committee members. There were 15 teachers in each group, and the committee received a summary of the comments. She asked committee members to compare the comments with the data they reviewed from the survey but not to weigh it as heavily because it was from a much smaller pool of individuals.

Martens also passed out the transcript from the West Des Moines public forum and the comment received post-forum from Grinnell. She encouraged committee members to use the public forum feedback to see if there were any additional points of revision within the standards that should be considered by the group.

The committee will meet again June 22, 2016. Martens said the hope is that the committee at that time will be able to write a recommendation that will be presented to the State Board of Education in regards to revision of the literacy standards.

The meeting was dismissed at 3:20 p.m. A couple of committee members stayed after to record additional comments about the standards in a “parking lot.” Their comments include:

- An overreliance of FAST – not being used as a screening tool.
- Will implementation (if it happens) of Smarter Balanced assessments eliminate the requirement for a second measure? Or will districts continue to need to offer evidence via FAST, MAP, ACT, PSAT ...?
- Do we need a standard frequency in determining what is to be considered “substantive”?

- Need a conversation about overarching theme of data – condensing simplifying standards, eliminate skill/specific.
- Reading Standard 6 – Anchor standard and K-12 in narrative and informational text needs to be revised to distinguish point of view from perspective and clarify each.

Under the “other” comments:

- It is disturbing to read so many negative comments that imply our students are not expected to think deeply. This seems to be an indication that respondents lack the depth of instructional understanding to teach conceptually.